DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 182 692 CS 005 243

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TITLE I Did It, I Said It, I Wrote It, I Read It: A Language Experience Approach to Reading.
INSTITUTION Burrillville School Dept., R.I.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C. Right to Read Program.
PUB DATE [79]
NOTE 24p.; For related documents see CS 005 242-244

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Awareness; Drama; Elementary Education; *Integrated Activities; Intermediate Grades; *Language Arts; Language Experience Approach; *Learning Activities; Reading Instruction; *Remedial Reading; Science Activities; Teaching Guides
IDENTIFIERS Right to Read

ABSTRACT

The activities described in this booklet were developed by three teachers in the Burrillville Reading Observes Necessary Communication Objectives and Skills (Broncos) project, a Right to Read program in Burrillville, Rhode Island. The eight activities may be used in elementary schools to integrate language arts with other subject areas including drama, science, photography, and career awareness. Each of the activities is described, materials needed are listed, and procedures are outlined. The appendixes contain sources for "how to" ideas and other related activities. (HKM)

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I DID IT
I SAID IT
I WROTE IT
I READ IT

A Language Experience Approach to Reading

Written by ..... Burrillville School Department Teachers:
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With the assistance of Marilyn Eanet, Rhode Island College Consultant

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This publication is supported by a grant from Right to Read, U.S.O.E. as part of the BRONCOS Reading Improvement Program.

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DEDICATION

We dedicate this book to all our students who worked so hard and contributed so much to the success of the projects.

A special thanks to Right to Read for its support.

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PREFACE

One of the most valuable resources of any school is the creative problem-solving ability of its teachers. This booklet is the result of the application of that ability by three teachers to the problem of helping a specific group of youngsters with poor self-concepts, negative attitudes towards books, and low reading and language achievement levels. The three, a teacher of a self-contained fourth grade classroom including many children with special needs, a special reading teacher, and an art teacher, chose to involve these children in activities that incorporated art and language in ways designed to positively affect both attitudes and skills. Their efforts were encouraged and supported by the Right to Read BRONCOS Reading Improvement Program which provided materials and technical assistance. Although involvement in the Right to Read project was the initial impetus for these activities, most of the activities themselves can be carried out with inexpensive materials readily available in most schools. The essential ingredients for the success of these projects were not the materials or the input of an outside consultant; they were the teachers' energy, enthusiasm, and concern for the children, and their ability to work together to create better learning experiences for their students.

As you modify and adapt these suggestions to your teaching situation, keep these points in mind. First, active participation in and enjoyment of an activity is more important than the final outcome. Don't let a compulsion to make elaborate costumes or to produce perfect books overwhelm the language development and attitudinal goals!

Secondly, the activities are intended to be cooperative, not competitive. Share ideas and projects within and between classes and with your fellow teachers. It was an attitude of sharing and cooperative effort that made the work of the three authors of this booklet so productive.

Marilyn G. Eanet, Consultant
BRONCOS Reading Improvement Program

INTRODUCTION

We developed our program in the hope of encouraging students to have a more positive attitude about reading and books.

Each member of our team had worked with the children in separate areas. We decided to coordinate our strengths in language arts, reading and art in order to offer our students a more integrated program. Using the language experience approach as our vehicle, we tried to make the children aware of many different forms of communication.

We worked with a self-contained class (children 9 to 12 years old) in which many of the students had special needs. Most of them had experienced repeated failure and frustration with traditional reading programs and publisher-designed materials. We hoped to reach these children through a flexible language experience approach.

Language experience focuses on the relationship between oral and written language. Children learn to read while talking, listening, and writing. There is emphasis on reading as a communication process rather than just word-calling or mastery of skills.

In our program students had the opportunity to create and share materials which were based on their own experiences and rooted in their own language patterns. They were able to explore different forms of communication such as drama, puppetry, photography, advertising, and illustrating books and posters.

Many of the students were highly motivated by the materials of their own creation. This approach fostered a harmony within the group by getting children to work productively on joint projects. It also helped to reduce their fear of failure and to give them a more personal stake in wanting to read.

Our purpose in writing this booklet is to demonstrate what can be done with a variety of ideas and approaches to language. We also want to provide a basis from which you can develop activities adapted to your own needs. We hope that your children enjoy and profit from these activities as much as our students did.

Ellen, Donna-Jean, Karen

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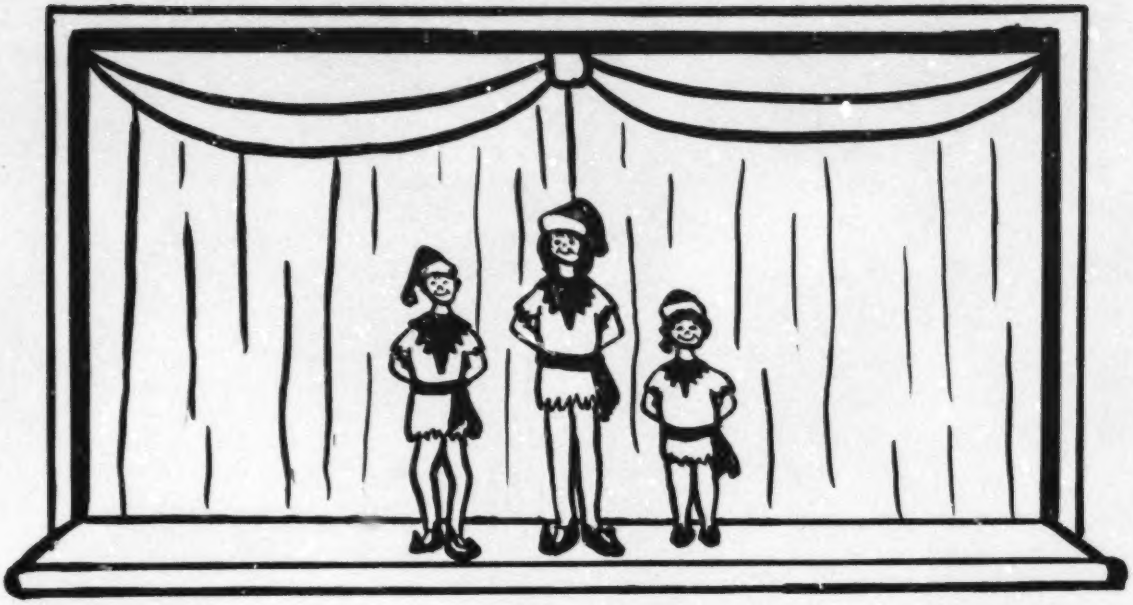
HAMMING IT UP



Dramatic activities can be used to encourage children to express their thoughts and feelings creatively. They also enhance spontaneity and naturalness in oral expression.

Materials: books and filmstrips on fairy tales and tall tales; paper and pencils; typewriter; large cardboard, paint, and Exacto knife for scenery and puppet theater; miscellaneous materials for costumes such as felt scraps, sheets, tinfoil, and newspaper; miscellaneous materials for puppets such as socks, paper bags, felt, and sticks.*

The dramatic medium helps to stimulate the imagination and to provide outlets for creative expression. Dramatization gives children the opportunity to pretend they are somebody else. This reduces their fear of failure and sometimes helps to overcome their reading and language barriers.

We chose a holiday play as a class production. The children had a chance to communicate through voice modulation, facial expression, gesture, and posture. Costumes which they made helped them to assume the roles of the characters. Cardboard scenery which they designed and constructed helped them "get into" the setting.

* See Appendix I

As they assumed the roles of their characters, the students began to be more natural and spontaneous in their oral expression. Working in pairs, they memorized their lines.

Putting on the play required a lot of cooperative plannning. The group's efforts were rewarded when the play was well received by an audience of their peers.

Overall, the play helped to bolster the students' confidence as well as improve their reading and speaking skills.

After memorizing and putting on a play, students wanted to try a hand at writing skits of their own. We agreed upon a theme of fairy tales and then followed this procedure:

1. We read a number of fairy tales and saw some colorful filmstrips.
2. We discussed what the stories had in common and came up with some "conventions" of a fairy tale (e.g. kings, beautiful princesses, witches, dragons).
3. Students worked in small groups to write their own skits. These could be original or based upon a familiar fairy tale.
4. Scripts were typed and distributed for practice with oral interpretation and expression.
5. Students worked out simple costumes and scenery for their skits.
6. Students dramatized their fairy tales to the delight of a group of younger children.

Puppetry is another activity which encourages dramatization and creative self-expression. It is especially effective with children who are shy or self-conscious. Concealed behind the curtain of the puppet theater, they sometimes lose some of their inhibitions.

1. We chose tall tales as a theme and learned more about them through books and filmstrips.
2. We arrived at some of the conventions of a tall tale (super-hero who can harness the forces of nature, tame wild animals, etc.).
3. We talked about some current super-heros such as Spider Man, Batman, Wonder Woman, and the Six Million Dollar Man.
4. Students worked in small groups to invent a super-hero and write their own puppet skit.
5. Students made a variety of puppets (felt, paper bag, sock).
6. Students constructed a puppet theater and put on their productions for peers and for younger audiences.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In science, the class was studying nutrition and the four basic food groups. We were also working with money concepts in math. The following project combined these two areas into a culminating activity.

Materials: 12" x 18" construction paper, 12" x 18" tagboard, pencils, crayons, old magazines that feature food, math paper (if desired), play money (if desired).

We began a discussion about various types of eating-out establishments, ranging from fast-food places to restaurants for family dining to very exclusive restaurants. Specialty and ethnic dining places were also mentioned. Some questions that were used to encourage discussion were: What kinds of restaurants have you been to? Why did you choose to go there? Do some inexpensive restaurants have the same food as more expensive ones? What makes them charge more for the same type of food?

We next examined menus acquired from various restaurants and it was pointed out that food is usually grouped in some way. For example: sandwiches, appetizers, dinners, seafood, desserts. We then observed that across from each food item the prices are written and that on some menus, there were pictures of some of the meals.

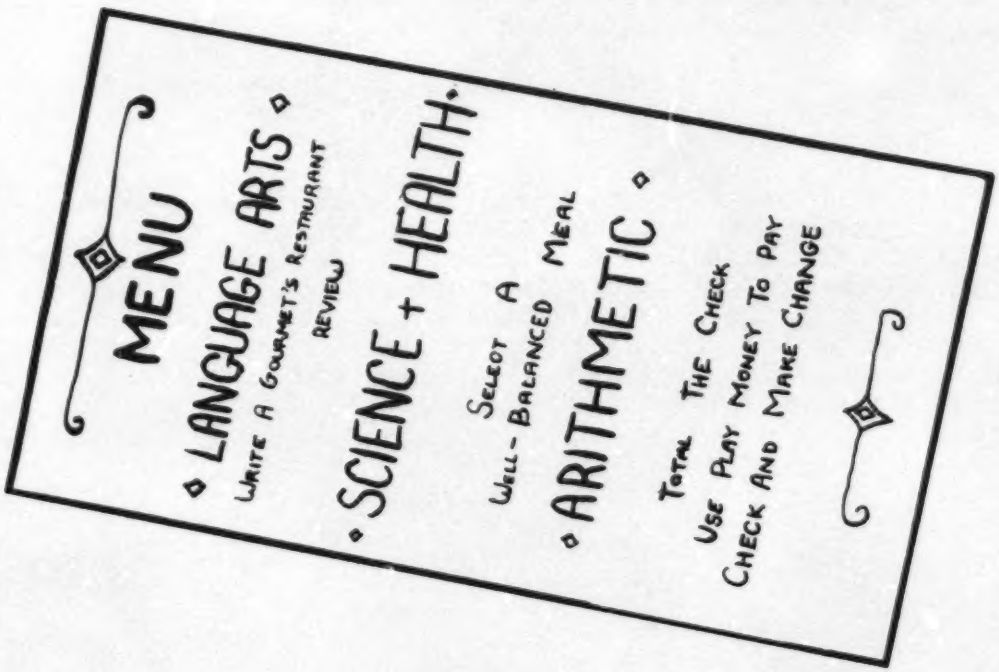
We then began to invent our own eating establishments.

1. On the construction paper the children began to create their own menus. The decision was theirs as to what type of food was to be offered, what prices would be charged, and how the menu was to be designed and arranged. Spelling was not corrected at this stage.

2. After the menus had been written, short conferences were held with each pupil simply to correct spelling and help with alignment. The student was then given a piece of tagboard to make a final copy of the menu.

3. Pictures of meals were drawn or cut from magazines. The menu was folded to allow for a cover design featuring the name and/or picture of the establishment.

MORE FOOD FOR THOUGHT



SAY CHEESE, PLEASE

Photographs can be a springboard for many language activities. We used them for writing main ideas (picture captions) and for developing classification and sequence skills.

Materials: camera, film, flashcubes, slide projector, cassette recorder, large print typewriter, copystand, record albums, paper, pencils.

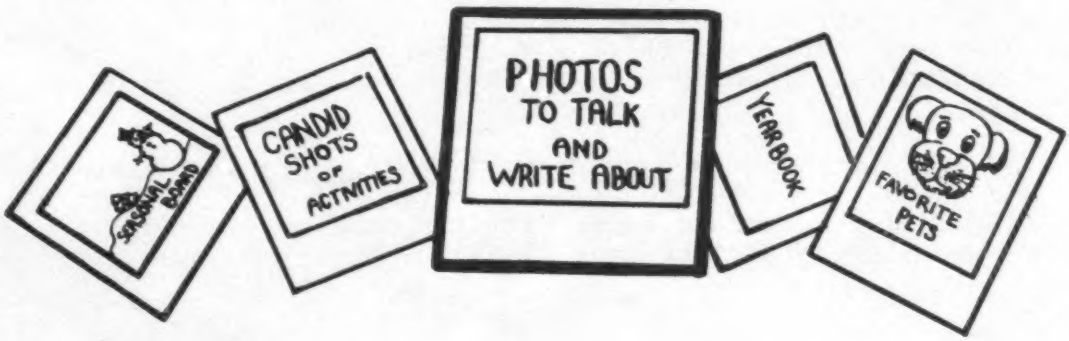
Photography is a creative medium for student involvement. Just put a camera in the kids' hands and let them take pictures around the school, the neighborhood, and the community. When the slides or prints are developed, there is plenty to talk about and write about. Photos are a great visual stimulus for language activities. Writing captions helps students to focus on a main idea or topic. Arranging the pictures in order helps with classification and sequencing skills.

We decided to prepare a slide presentation to make new students familiar with our school. This is the procedure we followed:

1. The children took many pictures of activities in and around the school.
2. We viewed the slides and classified them in groups - e.g., classroom activities, cafeteria scenes, outdoor sports, etc.
3. We discussed possibilities for background music, and students selected excerpts from a number of children's albums (Peter Pan, Small World, Winnie the Pooh) and from popular songs.
4. We viewed the slides again, arranged them in sequence, and dictated a script to accompany the slides and music.
5. We typed the script with a primer typewriter. Then we put each page on a copystand and photographed it to make slides of the script.
6. Using a carousel projector and a cassette recorder, we synchronized the slides and the music. The children required technical assistance with this task.

Our final product, a creative multi-media presentation, was something the children could be really proud of. They enjoyed showing it and explaining how they produced it.

This project made the students more aware of photography and music as channels of communication. It also integrated several languaging skills - discussion, writing and editing the script, and sequencing the slides.



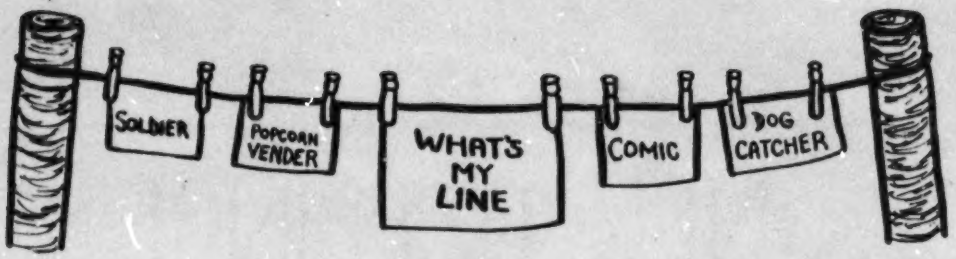
DOCTOR, LAWYER, INDIAN CHIEF

These activities are good for developing topical and inference skills. They also involve discussion, reading, writing, dramatization, and illustration.

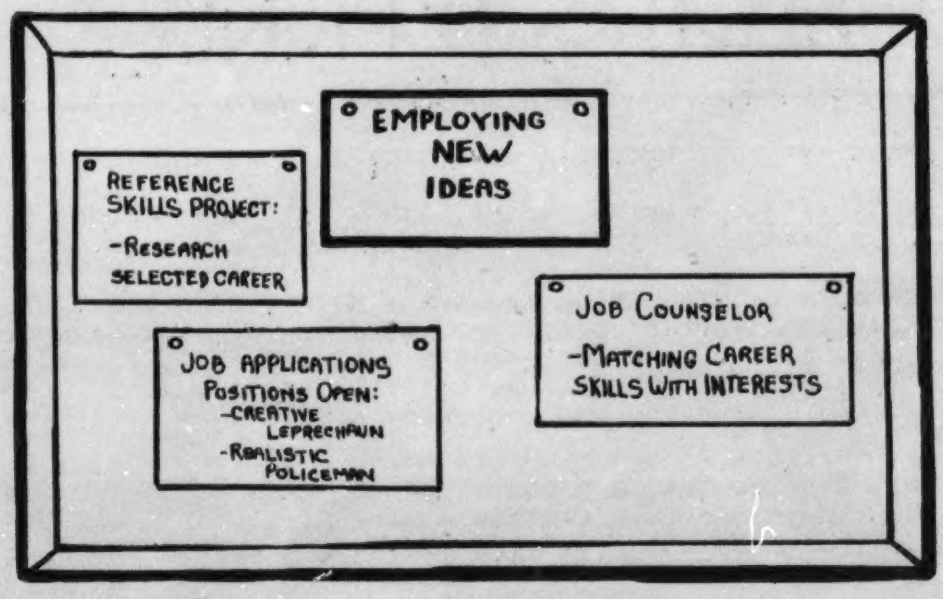
Materials: clothes line, index cards, clothes pins, magazines, laminating film or clear contact paper.

In this unit we encouraged children to project themselves out of the school setting and into a future career role. We discussed and read about different career opportunities. We investigated many unconventional jobs as well as the traditional careers.

1. We shared the Popeye Careers Comic Books and other career-oriented books and materials.
2. Students used magazine pictures to make a large collage depicting many different types of jobs.



3. We strung a clothesline across the room and on it we pinned the question "What's My Line?". Cards naming a variety of occupations were also clothes-pinned to the line.
4. Each student zeroed in on a particular career as a topic.
5. Each student wrote a series of clues related to this particular career.
6. Students read their clues to the rest of the group, playing the guessing game of "What's My Line?".
7. Some students did pantomimes of their careers to accompany their written clues.
8. Each student illustrated his career story.
9. All of the career stories were typed, laminated, and compiled in a class book entitled "What's My Line?".



YOU'VE SOLD ME!

This activity encourages finding main ideas.

Materials: Stories, books, 12" x 18" construction paper, 12" x 18" tagboard, pencils, crayons, magic markers.

We began a discussion about how advertisers use billboards and signs to advertise products. Some questions we answered were: How do you find out about a product? What do you notice first in a billboard? What do all billboards have in common? Through the discussion the following points were brought out:

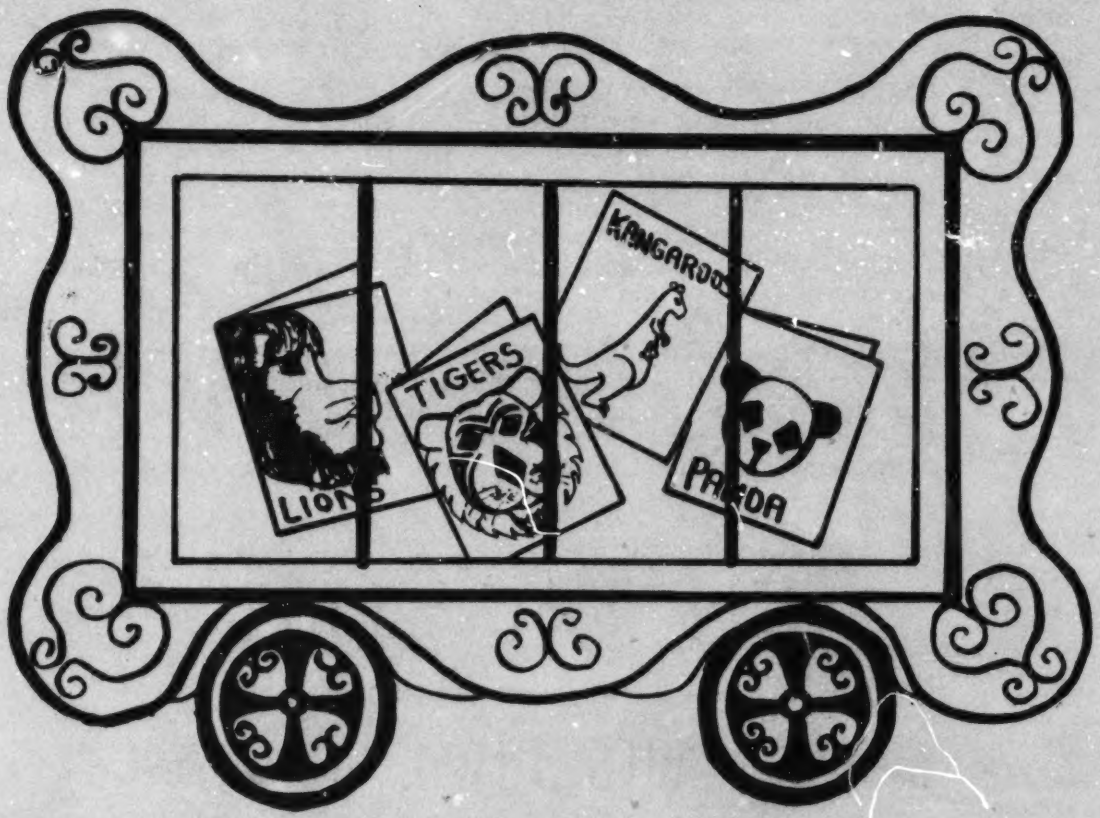
a. billboards are simple;
b. they contain a picture and the name of the product;
c. they sometimes contain a slogan;
d. they use color, design or shape to catch the eye.

We then began our project with the children choosing any story or book they had read to advertise on a poster. They chose one very important idea, scene, or happening from the story to depict -- an excerpt from the story that would entice others to want to read it. This procedure was then followed:

1. Using construction paper first (since erasures can be made easily and experimenting can be done without fear of ruining a project), each child drew the scene, happening, or event, and wrote a sentence or a quotation from the story under the picture. Spelling was not a concern at this stage.
2. The children were reminded that it is very important that the poster contain the title and author of the book.
3. After the students had worked on construction paper, short individual conferences were held to help with spelling. The students then made a final copy of their advertisement on tagboard. The posters were displayed in the library, corridors, and classroom.

I'LL TRY THAT
WHAT'S THE POINT
MATCH ILLUSTRATIONS WITH TITLE
SALES PITCH
CAPSULIZE A BOOK IN A BRIEF T.V. COMMERCIAL
CAN YOU PICTURE IT?
ILLUSTRATE MAIN IDEAS OF A BOOK

GNU ZOO REVIEW



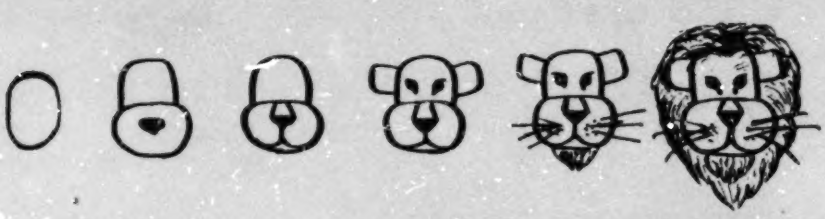
This activity used high interest materials to motivate students to read and write.

Students created animal stories using their own language patterns and based on their own experiences. They then illustrated their stories and they read and shared them with others.

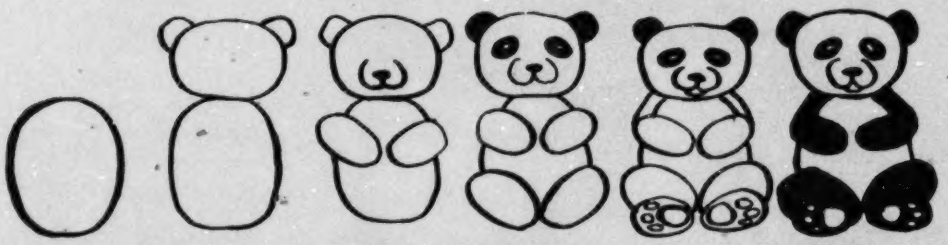
Materials: books, stories, pencils, writing paper.

We decided to publish a set of animal books which could remain in the library. The children began this project in art class by means of lessons geared to the development of basic skills which are needed in drawing and reading.

1. The children were first given a lesson in drawing animals's heads using drawing guides developed by the art teacher.* This is an approach to drawing which uses basic shapes and builds on these shapes. Each child then made a large poster of an animal's head.



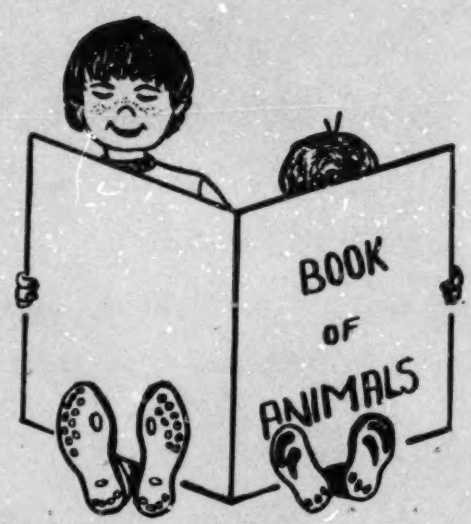
2. The next lesson was more complex. It showed the children how to draw the entire animal by building up shapes. At this point the children had practice in setting up a plan of approach - a means of solving the drawing problem by looking for basic shapes in the body of the animal.



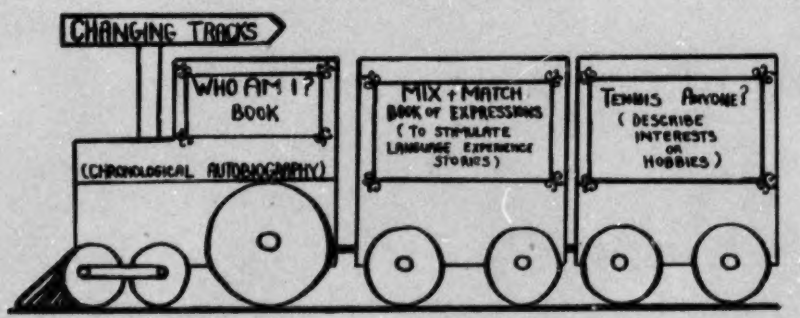
3. The third lesson gave the students the opportunity to put their recently developed skills to work. They had to select an animal-picture card and draw the animal using the procedure that had been introduced in previous lessons.

* See Appendix I

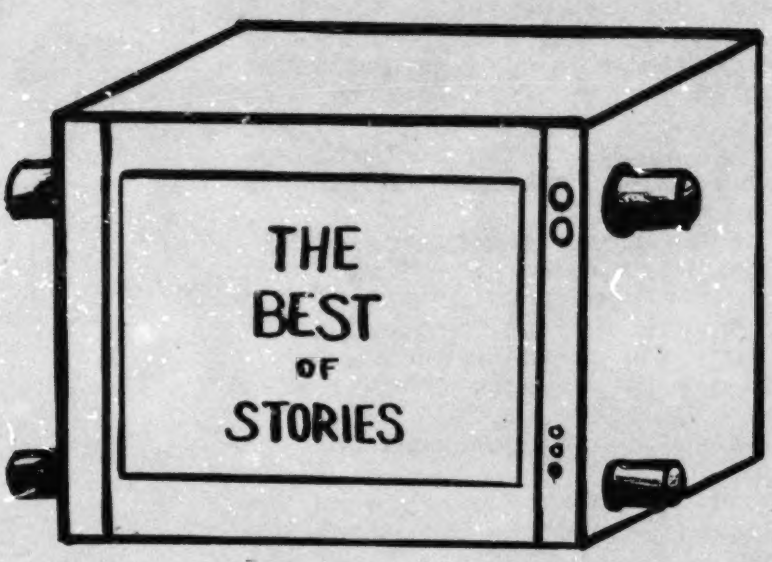
4. Next the children began the languaging part of the project. After reading a unit in our basal reader on animals, each child chose a favorite animal. We expanded on this by arranging with some sixth grade students to spend time with the fourth graders on a one-to-one basis. Together they chose and read stories from the library dealing with their favorite animals.
5. Using the language-experience approach, the fourth graders dictated to the sixth graders everything they knew and could remember from their readings. The sixth graders, for the most part, were responsible for grouping ideas, spelling, and punctuating. The children then transcribed their stories neatly onto drawing paper.



6. Each child discussed with the art teacher the pictures which would best illustrate the contents of his book. Then the children drew their pictures, applying their knowledge about drawing animals from shapes.
7. Once the illustrations were completed, the pages were laminated and the book was assembled. The children read their books to other classes and put them on display.



TUNED IN TO BOOKS



This project focused on recalling details, summarizing, and finding main ideas. It also encouraged the students to work together cooperatively.

Materials: stories, books, 6" x 9" blank sheets of paper, lined paper, pencils, crayons, magic markers, rolls of white, non-glossy shelf lining paper, empty carton, empty roll tubes from holiday wrapping paper (2-3 feet long), knife, paint and brushes, yardsticks, tacks and tape.

We developed this project by following the format outlined below.

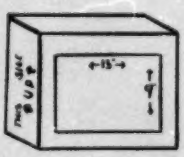
1. The children worked in pairs and read their favorite book. They then listed in 15-20 sentences important ideas, events, and happenings that summarized the story. These sentences were numbered in sequential order. (Spelling was of no concern at this stage)
2. The students then transferred each sentence onto one sheet of blank paper and illustrated that idea. At the conclusion of this activity we had 15 sheets of paper, each one containing one idea from the story. An additional sheet contained the name of the story, it's author, and the illustrators (the children themselves).

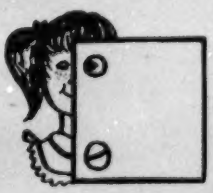
3. Each pair of students was given a piece of white rolled shelf paper. The length of the paper depended on the number of sentences and the size of the opening in the TV. Our TV opening was 15 inches so each sentence with a picture needed 15 inches of rolled shelf paper. For example, pairs of students that had ten pictures received 150 inches of continuous paper.

4. The children measured off 15 inches per scene. The first block was reserved for the title frame. Then the students proceeded to copy each of their separate scenes in sequence on the rolled paper, adding color. A block at the end can be reserved for "The End".
5. When all the scenes were on the rolled paper, the end of the paper having the last block was taped to an empty tube and rolled around it. A loose elastic was used on the outside to prevent unrolling.

6. At the end of this project, we had over twenty "story-programs" on tubes in a box that the students could take and insert in the TV, tack the beginning to the top roll of the television, and watch and read their favorite story. The story was always re-rolled on the bottom permanent roll before storing.

We followed this procedure for constructing the televsion.





1. Stand the box on its side so the bottom is facing you.
2. Cut approximately a 9" x 15" rectangle out of the bottom.
3. Reinforce any seams with masking tape.
4. Paint the box.
5. Cut out two parallel holes on each side of the box. Top holes should be the diameter of the tubes. Bottom holes will be slightly larger to accommodate the tube and rolled story.

APPENDIX I

FOR "HOW-TO" IDEAS

COSTUMES

Gilbreath, Alice. Making Costumes For Parties, Plays, and Holidays. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1974.

This book contains twenty-one suggestions for making costumes, ranging from traditional dress to highly original fanciful creations.

Parish, Peggy. Costumes to Make. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1970.

This book includes simple, step-by-step instructions, supplemented by many diagrams and illustrations, for making fifty costumes, ranging from historical dress and storybook characters to special holiday and animal outfits.

DRAWING

Emberley, Ed. Ed Emberley's Drawing Book of Animals. Canada: Little, Brown and Company Limited, 1970.

This book provides simple instructions for drawing a variety of animals using shapes and lines.

Emberley, Ed. Ed Emberley's Drawing Book of Faces. Canada: Little, Brown and Company Limited, 1975.

This book provides simple instructions for drawing a wide variety of faces reflecting various emotions and professions.

PUPPETRY

Hutchings, Margaret. Making and Using Finger Puppets. New York: Taplinger Publishing Co., Inc., 1973.

This introduction to the art of puppetry offers numerous illustrations and thorough instructions for making a variety of fun to use puppets.

Ross, Laura. Scrap Puppets: How To Make and Move Them. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1978.

This book provides instructions for making the four basic types of puppets (hand, red, shadow, and marionette) using scrap materials found around the home and at school.

Forte, Imogene; Pangle. Mary Ann; Tupa, Robie. Cornering Creative Writing. Nashville, Tennessee: Incentive Publications, 1974.

Numerous suggestions for short spontaneous creative writing activities; some highly motivating illustrations and story-starters.

Hall, Mary Anne. Teaching Reading As a Language Experience. New York: Harper & Row, 1972.

Reference book for the theory and research which support the language experience approach; in-depth discussion on how to implement a language experience program.

Pasamanick, Judith. Write-About. New York: Center for Media Development, 1978.

Series of reproducible worksheets with creative writing, reasoning, and reading activities.

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BURRILLVILLE RIGHT TO READ

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APPENDIX II

FOR MORE IDEAS

Allen, Claryce and Van Allen, Roach. Language Experience Activities. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976.

Comprehensive resource book with many ideas for implementing language experience activities in the classroom; concept of learning centers explained and many suggestions given for setting up specific learning centers.

Aukerman, Robert. "Language Experience Approaches" (Chapter 7) in Approaches to Beginning Reading. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1971.

Guidelines for implementing the language experience approach for beginning readers; examination of various published reading programs which employ the language experience method.

Farnette, Cherie; Forte, Imogene; Loss, Barbara. At Least A Thousand Things To Do. Nashville, Tennessee: Incentive Publications, 1977.

A career-awareness activity book with reproducible pages; offers a creative view of many different occupations.

Farnette, Cherie; Forte, Imogene; Loss, Barbara. I've Got Me and I'm Glad. Nashville, Tennessee: Incentive Publications, 1977.

A self-awareness book which provides learning activities that foster a positive self-concept.

Farnette, Cherie; Forte, Imogene; Loss, Barbara. Special Kids' Stuff. Nashville, Tennessee: Incentive Publications, 1976.

A collection of high-interest, low-vocabulary reading and language skills activities; provides learning experiences in comprehension, word recognition and usage, work study skills, and enrichment and appreciation.

Forte, Imogene; Pangle, Mary Ann; Tupa, Robie. Pumpkins, Pinwheels, and Peppermint Packages. Nashville, Tennessee: Incentive Publications, 1974.

Activities and learning centers related to American holidays and customs; suggestions for bulletin boards, games, arts and crafts projects, and puzzles.